



**European Parties Elections  
and Referendums Network**

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EUROPE AND ROMANIA'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS,  
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**Key points:**

- The Social Democrats won a narrow lead in the popular vote but the centre right Democrat Liberals secured a one seat lead in the new parliament.
- These two parties surprised observers by signing a coalition agreement, excluding the former governing party, the centrist National Liberal Party.
- The election saw the removal from parliament of the far right Greater Romania Party as it failed to reach the threshold for representation.
- The election was the first time that parliamentary elections were fought separately from the presidential poll and the first fought under a new electoral system based on single member districts.
- The economy dominated the campaign but corruption and the personality of state President Traian Basescu also featured.
- Despite Romania entering the EU less than two years earlier, European issues played only a peripheral role in the campaign.

In Romania's parliamentary elections of 30<sup>th</sup> November the electorate delivered a virtual tie between the two leading parties and left the politicians to resolve the question of who governs. The answer to that question, when it came a fortnight later, was a considerable surprise with the parliament's two largest parties coming together to sign a coalition agreement. The elections were the first free standing parliamentary contest – previously the parliamentary and presidential polls had taken place on the same date but the decoupling has occurred as a result of the extension of the presidential term of office from four to five years. They were also the first to be held under a new electoral system based on single member electoral districts.

Turnout fell to below 40%, perhaps unsurprising since Romania's politicians have tested the commitment of the country's voters by asking them to visit the polls five times in less than eighteen months – with potentially three more rounds of voting due in the coming year. The election marathon begins and ends with mercurial figure of President Traian Basescu. Basescu was elected in 2004 at the head of an electoral alliance between his Democrat Party and the National Liberals (the Truth and Justice Alliance), though it took just months for him to fall out with his former partners. The relationship became so poisoned that, early in 2007, the National Liberals supported moves to impeach Basescu – leading to a popular referendum which was won handsomely by the President in the spring of 2007.<sup>1</sup> Elections to the European Parliament<sup>2</sup> followed in the autumn and two rounds of voting for local elections in June 2008 completed the lead up to the parliamentary contest. Basescu, the very model of an activist President who is up for re-election in November 2009, could not resist intervening in the parliamentary campaign, although the level of support won by his party - now re-Christened the Democrat Liberal Party (PDL) - was significantly below his own poll ratings.

The National Liberal Party (PNL) continued to hold the Premiership throughout the term of the parliament, despite holding less than a fifth of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. They ran a minority government in partnership with the party of Romania's ethnic Hungarian community and with the tacit support of the leftist Social Democrats (PSD). After the split with Basescu, the National Liberals had gained only 13% of the vote in the European Parliament elections and, although they polled better in the local elections, it was clear from the beginning of the election campaign that they would struggle to compete with the PDL and the Social Democrats in the parliamentary contest. The best they could hope for was exactly what they achieved – a credible result that would apparently leave them in a position to act as king-makers.

The Social Democrats are undoubtedly one of the 'New Europe's' most adaptable and successful parties. The party's leaders shed their Communist heritage to take the mantle of anti-Ceausescu revolutionaries in 1989. They then governed in partnership with ultra-nationalists in the first half of the 1990s before evolving into a recognisably European social democratic party. The shock of defeat in 2004 had plunged the party into internal conflict which was heightened by corruption scandals but determined leadership from elder statesman and former President Ion Iliescu held the party together. And the Social Democrats strength in local government – reinforced by good results in June 2008 – continued to be a source of credibility and resources. The left undoubtedly entered the elections in better shape than they had been for some years since the previous General Election and with the reasonable expectation that they could emerge as the largest party.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Ed Maxfield, 'Europe and Romania's Presidential Impeachment Referendum, May 2007', *European Parties Elections and Referendums Networks Referendum Briefing No 15* at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/-\\_no\\_37-eb-romania07.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/-_no_37-eb-romania07.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See: Ed Maxfield, 'Romania's Elections to the European Parliament, November 25th 2007,' *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network European Parliament Election Briefing No 24* at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epnep\\_eb24\\_-\\_2007romania.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epnep_eb24_-_2007romania.pdf)

As Tables 1a and 1b show, the 2008 elections appear to have been another step in the consolidation of the party system into – for now at least – a three party contest. Apart from the National Liberals, the Social Democrats and the Democrat Liberals, the only other party to exceed the threshold for parliamentary representation was the Democratic Union of Hungarians (UDMR) which holds a vice-like grip on the votes of Romania’s ethnic Hungarian minority.<sup>3</sup> The clearest losers were the far right. The ultra-nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM) had sent shudders through liberal Europe when its candidate – Corneliu Vadim Tudor – won through to the presidential run-off ballot in the elections of 2000, while the party itself became the second largest grouping in parliament. The elections of 2004 had already seen a considerable reduction in support for the party but the results of 2008 confirmed that it would have no representation at all in the new parliament.

**Table 1a: Results of elections to the Romanian Chamber of Deputies**

	<b>2004 % vote</b>	<b>2004 seats</b>	<b>2008 % vote</b>	<b>2008 seats</b>
Truth and Justice Alliance	31.5	112	-	-
Democrat Liberal Party	-	-	32.4	115
National Liberal Party	-	-	18.6	65
Social Democrats*	36.8	132	33.1	114
UDMR	6.2	22	6.2	22
Greater Romania Party	13.0	48	3.2	0
Others	12.5	18	6.5	18
	100.0		100.0	

**Table 1b: Results of elections to the Romanian Senate**

	<b>2004 % vote</b>	<b>2004 seats</b>	<b>2008 % vote</b>	<b>2008 seats</b>
Truth and Justice Alliance	31.8	49	-	-
Democrat Liberal Party	-	-	33.6	51
National Liberal Party	-	-	18.7	28
Social Democrats*	37.2	57	34.2	49
UDMR	6.2	10	6.4	9
Greater Romania Party	13.6	21	3.6	0
Others	11.2	0	3.5	0
	100.0		100.0	

\*In both the 2004 and 2008 elections, the Social Democrats ran a joint slate of candidates with the much smaller Conservative Party (which was known as the Humanist Party in 2004). For the sake of clarity I have referred to this electoral alliance as the Social Democrats throughout.

Source: Central Election Bureaux ([www.bec2004.ro](http://www.bec2004.ro) and [www.becparlamentare2008.ro](http://www.becparlamentare2008.ro))

<sup>3</sup> Additionally a block of 18 seats in the Chamber of Deputies is reserved for the representatives of Romania’s officially recognised ethnic minorities.

## **From poll to poll: the long road to the elections**

In 2004, the Social Democrats had looked set to continue in office right to the very last minute. Their candidate had topped the poll in the first round of the presidential contest and the party started negotiations to form a coalition government. A narrow and dramatic victory for Traian Basescu in the presidential run-off changed the dynamic entirely. Basescu threatened the smaller parties with early parliamentary elections unless they supported a government led by his Truth and Justice Alliance. A coalition was eventually formed, leaving the Social Democrats in opposition.

Basescu – mayor of Bucharest until his election to the presidency – had constructed an image for himself as a tough and dynamic campaigner against corruption. He is also a political opportunist (he took his party from membership of Socialist International to affiliation with the centre-right European Peoples' Party) and someone who seems to struggle to build enduring team relationships. All of this led to the perhaps inevitable collapse of the coalition and ultimately to attempts to impeach him over the question of his role in government appointments.

The impeachment process, though, was a massive miscalculation by his opponents. The overwhelming vote of parliament (with three quarters of Deputies and Senators voting to impeach) contrasted starkly with the 70% support Basescu won in the referendum that was required as part of the process. Yet the constitution meant that Basescu was unable to force a change of government or call early parliamentary elections with such a small group of supporters in parliament. As a result, Calin Popescu Tariceanu of the National Liberals remained as Prime Minister even after the party split following the referendum, when a group led by two former party leaders – Valeriu Stoica and Teodor Stolojan - initially created a new party (the Liberal Democrats) and then merged with the Democrats to form the Democrat Liberals (PDL).

A striking feature of Romanian politics in the last decade has been the progressive blurring of the dividing line between the successors to the Communist regime and their opponents. Together with nationalism, the Communist/anti-Communist divide had formed the principal cleavage in Romanian politics after 1989. The National Liberals were re-formed in 1989 by anti-regime émigrés but the party retained a pragmatic attitude to coalition building from its pre-Communist era DNA. The Democrats had been formed after a 1991 split in the ex-Communist dominated National Salvation Front and so contained many figures whose relationship to the former regime was at best ambiguous. And the Social Democrats evolved from the other (more conservative) half of the National Salvation Front. The Democrats were problematic coalition partners in a centre-right government between 1996 and 2000 where they frequently caused tensions by defending client interests against the impact of the government's reform programme. Yet the Democrats (and the National Liberals) survived defeat in the 2000 elections while the most firmly anti-Communist party (the National Peasant Party) performed so badly that it failed to win any seats in the new parliament. This in turn created the opportunity for National Liberal and Democrat politicians to establish a new centrist/centre-right

formation to oppose the Social Democrats in the 2004 elections, the Truth and Justice Alliance.

At the same time, corruption had become a proxy for anti-Communism. Basescu in particular condemned opponents as representatives of a corrupt political ruling class. Valeriu Stoica branded his former colleagues ‘Petro-Liberals’ because of their links to a wealthy oil magnate who had given funds to both the National Liberals *and* the Social Democrats in the 2004 elections.<sup>4</sup> For Democrat Party politicians it was no doubt a useful means of distancing themselves from their own associations with the former regime. It served to create for the Democrat Liberals a self-image of representing a new politics (the Truth and Justice Alliance had adopted the orange motif of Ukraine’s pro-Western reformers in 2004 and the Democrat Liberals retained the colours after the split from the National Liberals). It also fostered a helpful, though unspecific, public image for the party – and more particularly for its leader Traian Basescu - as representing change and modernisation.

The 2008 elections saw a switch away from an electoral system based on closed county-based lists to single member constituencies – partly in response to concerns about accountability that had been highlighted by the impeachment issue.

The former electoral system of county-based closed lists gave considerable power to those who controlled the party machine since it placed the gift of effectively safe parliamentary seats – via the appointment of the top positions on the lists – in their hands. The new electoral law that was eventually adopted combined a relatively simple system of elector choice – a single round of voting in single member ‘colleges’ – with a complex system of seat allocation.<sup>5</sup> Proportionality was shoe-horned into the single ballot *and* the system of single member colleges.

For elections to the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of parliament) and the Senate (the upper house), votes are initially aggregated at a national level to determine which parties have passed the qualifying threshold for securing representation. The basic threshold is 5% of the total votes cast with higher thresholds of between 8% and 10% applying for electoral alliances (depending on the number of parties in the alliance). Parties winning at least six colleges outright (ie polling more than 50% of the vote in those contests) are also deemed to have passed the threshold for representation in the Chamber of Deputies (or three seats for the Senate) even if they fail to reach the qualifying percentage vote quota nationally – this is the so called ‘UDMR provision’ designed to ensure that the party of the Hungarian minority (whose support is highly concentrated) retains its parliamentary representation.

The votes won by parties crossing the national threshold are then totalled in each of 43 electoral constituencies and a quota established by dividing the total number of these

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<sup>4</sup> See: Valeriu Stoica, *Unificarea Dreptei*, Humanitas: Bucharest, 2008 for Stoica’s account of his efforts to create a broad centre-right party based on co-operation between the Democrats and the National Liberals.

<sup>5</sup> See: Law Number 35 of 13 March 2008: <http://www.becparlamentare2008.ro/legislatie.html>.

votes by the number of seats to be elected by the constituency.<sup>6</sup> The number of seats won by each qualifying party at this first stage of allocation is calculated by dividing their vote by the quota. This process results in remaindered votes for each party and unallocated seats which are transferred up to a national pot for further redistribution.

Candidates of qualifying parties winning more than 50% of the vote in their college are automatically elected. Candidates elected through the proportional adjustment are drawn from those who stood in the constituencies, with the votes won in those contests serving to rank the candidates. Those elected via the proportional adjustment are then appointed to serve as Deputies for a particular college. The tendency of the system to appoint Deputies to represent colleges where they were defeated in the ballot has attracted criticism, including from President Basescu who was quick to make calls for adjustments to the electoral law after the results were in.

### **The election campaign<sup>7</sup>**

Eleven parties entered the contest for parliamentary seats, fielding between them 2,911 candidates. These were joined by 31 independent candidates and lists submitted by the minority organisations contesting the reserved seats. Aside from the five parties which had representation in the previous parliament, only the right wing New Generation Party fielded a full slate of candidates.

The three main parties each published detailed programmes for government.<sup>8</sup> The National Liberals led on the record of economic growth since they entered government in 2004 and they promised measures to ensure continued growth of 6-7% per annum, major public spending initiatives together with continued liberalisation of market structures and tax simplification. The party's third priority was continued investment in education and health with investment in transport infrastructure following close behind. The National Liberals promised continued reform of public administration, reform of the legal system and continued efforts to tackle corruption. Their final major pledge related to promoting a plan for sustainable energy production.

The Social Democrats offered ten pledges, the leading ones of which were: to increase the income and spending power of all Romanian citizens (with changes to the minimum wage, to pensions and energy prices); to guarantee citizens access to quality health and education; a more dynamic and competitive economy to be achieved mainly via tax changes; and to boost agriculture. Reform of justice and public administration featured too, as did measures to boost energy efficiency.

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<sup>6</sup> The 43 electoral constituencies are made up of the 41 administrative counties of Romania plus the capital, Bucharest, and a constituency for non-resident Romanian nationals. Four colleges for the Chamber of Deputies (and two for the Senate) are reserved for non-resident Romanian nationals with the election of those representatives being established in the same way as for domestic colleges.

<sup>7</sup> News reports in this section are drawn from: the TV stations Realitatea TV ([www.realitatea.net](http://www.realitatea.net)) and TVR ([www.tvr.ro](http://www.tvr.ro)), the newspapers Adevarul ([www.adevarul.ro](http://www.adevarul.ro)) and Romania Libera ([www.romanioliberal.ro](http://www.romanioliberal.ro)), and the news web-sites Nine O Clock ([www.nineoclock.ro](http://www.nineoclock.ro)) and Hot News ([www.hotnews.ro](http://www.hotnews.ro)).

<sup>8</sup> Available at [www.pnl.ro](http://www.pnl.ro), [www.psd.ro](http://www.psd.ro) and [www.pd.ro](http://www.pd.ro).

The Democrat Liberals promised a different mode of government that was based on responsible management, participation and efficiency. The programme reflected the role of intellectuals close to Stolojan and Stoica in crafting policy as it set out to explain the social model that underpinned the Democrat Liberal manifesto and the principles that would govern the party's decisions in the period to 2012 as well as offering detailed policy proposals in a wide range of areas. The party aimed for a 'European' standard of living driven by investment in human capital (via investment in education and health and the family). The Democrat Liberals also prioritised market liberalisation, promotion of technology and research, boosting capital markets and investment in transport. Familiar themes of reform of justice, reduction in bureaucracy and measures to tackle corruption also featured – although perhaps with less prominence than might have been expected given Traian Basescu's campaigning themes in recent years.

Despite the breadth of detailed commitments in the party manifestos, it was the state of world economy that dominated the news agenda throughout the autumn. The global economic down-turn provided an ominous back-drop to the parliamentary polls and created a tough climate for a governing party to face the electorate. Romanians, rarely the most optimistic people when asked about their nation's prospects, were significantly more pessimistic about the future in the autumn than they had been in the summer.<sup>9</sup> The grim economic news continued throughout the campaign with, for example, major international investors Nokia and Michelin announcing 2,000 lay-offs less than a week before polling day. The National Liberals had made much of their economic successes during the local election campaign in June but this confidence was looking decidedly mis-placed by the end of November.<sup>10</sup> Adding to their difficulties, the government found itself embroiled in a major dispute over public sector pay, with teachers threatening strike action during the campaign. President Basescu weighed in on the economy by proposing the suspension of vehicle taxes to aid the motor manufacturing industry. Yet it is hard to discern the extent to which any party gained an advantage from the issue. The polls suggest a slight shift from the Democrat Liberals towards the Social Democrats over the autumn but the National Liberals do not appear to have suffered a loss of support – and in any case the causal link is more difficult to discern. With the National Liberals providing the government, the Democrat Liberals the presidency and Social Democrats running many important Town Halls, it would be understandable for voters to be unclear about who was responsible for the local impact of what was clearly an international situation.

There were accusations of violence and intimidation directed at party workers and a major mining accident in which twelve people died briefly made international as well as national headlines. But these registered no more than a fleeting impact on what remained a low-key campaign. Even Traian Basescu's interventions (most controversially when he suggested he could not countenance accepting either the National Liberal or Social

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<sup>9</sup> An INSOMAR poll published on November 7<sup>th</sup> showed 51% of respondents believing that the economy would get worse in the coming year, compared to 29.5% in July. However, the number of people reporting that they were already worse off than a year before only marginally increased. See: [http://www.insomar.ro/new/barometru\\_noiembrie\\_2008.pdf](http://www.insomar.ro/new/barometru_noiembrie_2008.pdf), accessed 10 November 2008.

<sup>10</sup> The National Liberal message guide for the local elections had placed economic transformation at the forefront of their campaign, claiming that government measures had created a strong and growing economy. See: *Ghid Mesaj Generale pentru Alegerile Locale 2008*, PNL: Bucharest, 2008.

Democrat party leaders as Prime Minister) failed to ignite the levels of public engagement that were seen when his own position was at stake. Polls varied little beyond the margin of error from beginning to end of the campaign with none of the parties registering a significant blow against their opponents. In a poll published towards the end of the campaign, 7% of respondents claimed to have been contacted at home by election campaigners and 10% had participated in an event or public meeting organised by the parties. While 61% had received election leaflets, only 31% knew the name of the local candidate for their preferred party. The same poll asked voters their opinion of the campaigns run by each of the three main parties and only for the National Liberals did the 'favourable' score exceed their voting intention percentage – indifference seemed to be the winner with more than 40% of respondents having neither a positive nor a negative opinion of the campaigns of each party.<sup>11</sup>

## **Europe and the parliamentary elections**

Romania's accession to the EU on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 had been met with considerable public optimism and only a few reservations (mainly centred on concerns about price increases.) A minor party on the right (the National Initiative Party) flirted with Euroscepticism and the Greater Romania Party helped to form the 'Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty group' in the European Parliament with other extreme right-wing MEPs. But public support for EU membership has been such that Euroscepticism has yet to find a mainstream voice.

The Social Democrats' manifesto pledged to attain membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism and of the Euro by 2014. The party also aspired to a greater regional role, making Romania the 'Spain of Central and Eastern Europe'. The Democrat Liberals also committed to membership of ERMII and the Euro but without setting a date. They aimed to take Romania into the Schengen area by 2011 and, like the Social Democrats, talked of a greater role for Romania within the wider Black Sea region. The National Liberal's commitments on Europe were harder to discern, as they preferred to focus on their economic record and to talk of making Romania the seventh largest economy in the EU. Concerns about the future role and ambitions of Russia sparked common commitments to closer working relationships with Georgia and the Ukraine within a Caspian Region strategy. There was also shared support for the entry of the Republic of Moldova into the EU.

The potential existed for the development of a controversial European angle to the economic crisis. To concerns about domestic prices and employment was added an increasingly tough environment for Romanians working abroad. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the collapse in the Spanish property market was leaving many Romanian workers with no option but to return home and opportunities elsewhere appeared to diminish too as, for example, the Dutch government considered extending restrictions on labour migration. However, the extent of agreement over EU membership and further steps towards integration via, for example, membership of the single currency, meant that

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<sup>11</sup> See: CSOP poll published on Hot News, 25 November 2008, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-politic-5167770-sondaj-csop-primul-loc-34-urmat-psd-31.htm> accessed 30 November 2008.



there was little party advantage to be gained over the European issue which remained a peripheral issue to the parliamentary campaign.<sup>12</sup>

### **Some questions answered, more raised – the implications of the results**

When the TV networks announced exit poll results as voting ended they showed a convincing Social Democrat lead. This, though, eroded steadily as the Central Election Bureau made successive announcements of its progress in counting the real votes. As Table 1a shows, in the end, the Social Democrats led by less than 1% in the popular vote and the Democrat Liberals held a one seat lead in the Chamber of Deputies (thanks in part to its strong showing among ex-pat voters).

As Table 2 shows, turnout had fallen to just 39.2%. As Tables 2 and 3 show, this was lower than for any Romanian election since the fall of Communism except the 2007 European Parliament poll, and lower than in the most recent Parliamentary elections in any of Romania’s ‘New European’ neighbours.

**Table 2: Turnout in the most recent parliamentary elections in Central and Eastern European states**

Romania (November 2008)	39.2%
Poland (October 2007)	53.8%
Slovakia (June 2006)	54.7%
Bulgaria (June 2005)	55.8%
Hungary (April 2006)	64.4%
Czech Republic (June 2006)	64.5%

**Table 3: Turnout compared in selected Romanian national elections**

	1990 General Election	2004 General Election	May 2007 Impeachment referendum	November 2007 European Parliament	June 2008 Local council elections	November 2008 Parliament
% T/O	86.2	56.5	44.5	29.5	50.7	39.2

In the wake of the results, the process of forming a government has provided more surprising outcomes than the election itself. Within minutes of the polls closing, Emil Boc, leader of the Democrat Liberals declared the election to be a clear victory for the centre-right – surely an indication of his party’s intention to seek a coalition agreement with the National Liberals. For their part the National Liberals indicated their willingness to negotiate with either of the two larger parties. Yet within a few days it became clear that the Democrat Liberals had reached a coalition agreement with the Social Democrats. Further intrigue was added to the mix when the Democrat Liberals’ Prime Minister Designate, Teodor Stolojan, withdrew from the role stating that it was time for a younger

<sup>12</sup> An interesting post-script to the elections is that a fifth of Romania’s 35 representatives in the European Parliament resigned following their election to the national legislature (five Democrat Liberals and two Social Democrats). See: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/public/inOut/out.do?language=EN> accessed 9 December 2009

generation to take over and for the leaders of the two coalition parties to take responsibility for delivering on their agreement. So, questions are raised about the future of the centre-right since the Democrat Liberals had invested considerable energy in their battle with the National Liberals to establish credentials as the leading anti-left party. The future of Stolojan, Stoica and the other former National Liberals in the Democrat Liberals is thrown into doubt. Even the influence of the President is unclear given his clearly stated preference for Stolojan to become premier – did his withdrawal indicate another example of Basescu’s willingness to abandon his friends for the sake of his career or was it the first indication that the Democrat Liberals were beginning to look to life beyond Basescu? The coalition may well be short-lived as many in the National Liberals have predicted, but it has caused great uncertainty in the unfolding story of Romania’s party system development.

Of greater certainty is the demise, at least in the short term, of the far right. The Greater Romania Party and the New Generation Party may seek future alliances with larger parties to regain their parliamentary representation although this seems less likely with both the Social Democrats and the Democrat Liberals in government and thus less likely to see benefits in courting extra-parliamentary partners. They will continue to have a limited presence in local government, although this may also erode over time as local politicians in Romania have a tendency to migrate towards parties holding power at national level. While there is always the possibility that external threats or internal economic problems could spark a revival for the far-right it is difficult to see how the current crop of nationalist politicians could revive their parties to the extent that they break back on to the parliamentary scene.

The impact of the new electoral system on the election outcome is difficult to gauge but was probably limited. The major parties engaged outside help in learning new campaigning techniques – the new system created an imperative for local – candidate led – campaigning which did not exist under the former system. But, as was exposed during the campaign, many of the candidates themselves did not understand the mechanics of the system and so campaigning effort was perhaps unlikely to have had a major differentiating effect. For future elections the impact may be greater, if the system is left un-amended. Incumbents may learn how to work their colleges to construct a local majority and this may be aided by further party system consolidation.

It is clear that the relatively few Romanians who turned out to vote in the parliamentary elections delivered a result which raises far more questions than it answers about the future of Romanian politics. More clarity may well be forthcoming in November 2009 with the presidential elections. However, if, as seems likely, the current President is re-elected for a second and final term, even this may only be a staging post towards establishing the shape of a ‘post-Basescu politics’ the final form of which could be years in the making.

*This is the latest in a series of election and referendum briefings produced by the European Parties Elections and Referendums Network (EPERN). Based in the Sussex*

*European Institute, EPERN is an international network of scholars that was originally established as the Opposing Europe Research Network (OERN) in June 2000 to chart the divisions over Europe that exist within party systems. In August 2003 it was re-launched as EPERN to reflect a widening of its objectives to consider the broader impact of the European issue on the domestic politics of EU member and candidate states. The Network retains an independent stance on the issues under consideration. For more information and copies of all our publications visit our website at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/1-4-2.html>.*